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# NASA Procedural Requirements

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## Subject: NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS)

**Responsible Office: Office of Human Capital Management**[| TOC](#) | [Preface](#) | [Chapter1](#) | [Chapter2](#) | [Chapter3](#) | [Chapter4](#) | [Chapter5](#) | [Chapter6](#) | [Chapter7](#) |  
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## CHAPTER 3. Definitions

3.1 Acceptable Level of Competence (ALOC). Performance at the Meets or Exceeds Expectations level that justifies an increase of an employee's rate of basic pay to the next higher step of the grade or the next higher rate within the grade of the employee's position.

3.2 Appraisal Period. The 1-year period from, May 1 through April 30, for which performance will be appraised and a rating of record prepared.

3.3 Critical Element. A work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance in that element would result in a determination that an employee's overall performance summary rating is Fails to Meet Expectations. Such elements shall be used to measure performance only at the individual level [5 CFR 430.203].

3.4 Minimum Appraisal Period. The minimum amount of time that an employee must be under a performance plan before a rating of record can be assigned. This period is 90 days.

3.5 Narrative Summary. A written or otherwise recorded summary that succinctly addresses an employee's significant performance achievement(s) or result(s) or observable behavior(s) relative to one or more of his/her performance elements and standards for the appraisal period.

3.6 NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS). The specific responsibilities and requirements for the planning, monitoring, developing, assessing, and rewarding of employee performance established under the policies and parameters of NASA's performance management system.

3.7 Noncritical Element. A dimension or aspect of individual, team, or organizational performance, exclusive of a critical element, that is used in assigning a performance summary level. Such elements may include, but are not limited to, objectives, goals, program plans, work plans, and other means of expressing expected performance. Failure on a noncritical element cannot be used as a basis for a performance-based action, nor can the employee's performance be summarized as Fails to Meet Expectations overall based on that failure [5 CFR 430.203].  
Note--noncritical does not mean not important.

3.8 Performance. The accomplishment of the work assignments and responsibilities described in the employee's performance plan.

3.9 Performance Appraisal. The review and evaluation of an employee's performance against the performance elements, standards, and performance indicators in the employee's performance plan on which the employee has had an opportunity to perform for the minimum appraisal period.

3.10 Performance Management System. The general policies and parameters under which the requirements of the NASA EPCS to plan, monitor, develop, assess, and reward employee performance have been established. The NASA Performance Management System (also referred to as the NASA EPCS) was approved by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on April 23, 1996.

3.11 Performance Plan. All written or otherwise recorded performance elements that describe what the employee is expected to accomplish during the appraisal period and the standards and performance indicators against which the employee's performance will be appraised.

3.12 Performance Indicator. In conjunction with a performance standard, an expression of a performance threshold, requirement, or expectation.

3.13 Performance Standard. A broad statement of the expected accomplishment or behavior.

3.14 Progress Review. A Rating Official's and employee's review and documented discussion of the employee's performance and progress in meeting the performance elements, standards, and performance indicators of the employee's performance plan and training and development needs and requirements. A progress review does not result in a rating of record.

3.15 Rating Definitions.

3.15.1 Performance Element Rating Levels.

3.15.1.1 Significantly Exceeds Expectations. Performance that consistently exceeds the performance standard and identified performance indicators to an exceptional degree for the element.

3.15.1.2 Meets or Exceeds Expectations. A broad range of performance that at least fully meets or may exceed the performance standard and identified performance indicators for the element.

3.15.1.3 Fails to Meet Expectations. Performance that fails to meet the established performance standard and identified performance indicators for the element.

3.15.2 Performance Summary Rating Levels (Pattern B) [5 CFR 430.208(d)].

3.15.2.1 Fails to Meet Expectations (Level 1). Performance for any critical element that is rated Fails to Meet Expectations.

3.15.2.2 Meets or Exceeds Expectations (Level 3). All rated critical elements must be rated at least as Meets or Exceeds Expectations.

3.15.2.3 Distinguished (Level 5). All rated critical and noncritical elements must be rated as Significantly Exceeds Expectations.

3.16 Rating Official. The individual (usually the immediate supervisor) who is responsible for:

3.16.1 Planning. Engaging the employee as a partner in the establishment of the employee's performance elements, standards, and performance indicators.

3.16.2 Monitoring. Promoting two-way communications with the employee and providing constructive feedback relative to the employee's performance during the appraisal period.

3.16.3 Developing. Assessing the employee's training and development needs and requirements to improve good or poor performance and, when possible, providing educational, developmental, and growth opportunities.

3.16.4 Rating. Fairly and accurately appraising the employee's performance against the performance plan at the end of each appraisal period.

3.16.5 Rewarding. When appropriate, fully and fairly utilizing awards and other methods of recognition to acknowledge the employee's performance and achievements.

3.17 Rating of Record. The written or otherwise recorded performance summary rating assigned at the end of an appraisal period or when required by special circumstances. The rating of record must be supported by a narrative summary of the employee's performance.

3.18 Reviewing Official. The individual (usually the second-level supervisor) who must review and approve a performance summary rating of Distinguished or Fails to Meet Expectations.

3.19 Supervisor. See Rating Official.

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